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PP RUEHLN RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHDBU #0151 0260949
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 260949Z JAN 06
FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6514
INFO RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1339
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1373
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1378
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1308
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1249
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1340
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1282
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1245
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1141
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RHMFISS/HQ USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1395
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1428
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0914
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 7596

UNCLAS DUSHANBE 000151

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/CACEN, SA, DRL, SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR KICKS OFF TAJIKISTAN'S 2006 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

¶1. Although President Emomali Rahmonov has not officially announced that he will be a candidate for the late 2006 presidential election in Tajikistan, Russian Ambassador Ramazan Abdulatipov more than endorsed him at a press conference on January 24. According to multiple press reports, he said, "We openly affirm that no one but Rahmonov will be able to work in this position."

¶2. At a Tajik Border Guard event on January 27, an Interfax reporter asked the U.S. Ambassador, "Ambassador Abdulatipov supports President Rahmonov for the next election. Do you?" The Ambassador replied that the United States supports the democratic political process, not personalities, and hopes that the forthcoming election will meet international standards. The reporter rejoined, "So you don't support President Rahmonov?"

¶3. COMMENT: So much for the quaint diplomatic tradition of not overtly interfering in the internal electoral affairs of a host country. In fact, Rahmonov is still generally popular in Tajikistan, and there appears to be no other viable candidate at this time. However, Russia's ham-fisted support for Rahmonov, especially this early before the election, could come back to haunt Moscow. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND